

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 IO-14 SSM-05 ISO-00 SSO-00
INRE-00 PCH-02 SAA-01 SS-15 SP-02 PM-05 INR-10
SES-02 PA-02 L-03 H-02 /096 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/P:WBHARRIS:RGH
APPROVED BY NEA/P:REUNDELAND
PA/PRS - MR. CARTER
H - MR. FLATEN
SSM - MR. MC ANDREW
NEA/IAI - MR. KORN
NEA/ARN - MR. DRAPER
NEA/EGY - MR. MARTHINSEN
NEA/ARP - MR. TWINAM

-----008677 090513Z /10

O 082327Z AUG 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USMISSION SINAI
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
JCS WASHDC 0000
CIA WASHDC 0000

NSC WASHDC 0000
DOD WASHDC
USICA WASHDC
USCINCEUR VAHINGEN GE
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS POUCH

UNCLAS STATE 200580

CINCEUR FOR POLAD, TEL AVIV FOR PAO, DELIVER BY 9. A.M.

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - AUGUST 8

1. FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE, FOLLOWING ARE
EXCERPTS FROM DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING FOR AUGUST 8, 1978.
FYI ONLY SPOKESMAN TODAY WAS MR. T. RESTON.

MR. RESTON: I HAVE A STATEMENT TO MAKE ON LEBANON.

BEGIN TEXT WE NOTE THE SLIGHT, IMMEDIATE IMPROVEMENT ON
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THE GROUND IN BEIRUT TODAY. THE FIGHTING MUST NOW BE
STOPPED, AND THE CEASEFIRE MUST BE SCRUPULOUSLY OBSERVED
BY ALL. THE SITUATION REMAINS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS, AND WE
CONTINUE TO REMAIN IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH THE LEBANESE
GOVERNMENT AND OTHER QUARTERS, STRONGLY URGING THAT
EVERYONE WITH INFLUENCE ON THE SITUATION EXERCISE
RESTRAINT AND DO ALL POSSIBLE TO ASSURE THAT CALM AND
STABILITY ARE RESTORED. A CEASEFIRE AND BREATHING SPELL
ARE ESSENTIAL, SO THAT EFFORTS CAN BE RESUMED TO RESOLVE
THE ISSUES WHICH HAVE LED TO THESE TERRIBLE OUTBREAKS
OF FIGHTING. END TEXT

Q. WHAT ACTUALLY OCCASIONED THIS STATEMENT? WHAT IS THE
SITUATION ON THE GROUND?

A. I DON'T HAVE A PRECISE FORMULATION TO GIVE YOU. WE
HAVE NOTED, AS I HAVE SAID, SOME SLIGHT, IMMEDIATE
IMPROVEMENT -- I.E., THE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE ABATING SOME-
WHAT.

THE THING WE WANT TO STRESS IS THAT WE BELIEVE THAT THE
FIGHTING MUST BE STOPPED; THE CEASEFIRE MUST BE
SCRUPULOUSLY OBSERVED.

AS I HAVE NOTED, THE SITUATION IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS. WE
ARE AGAIN CALLING ON ALL THE PARTIES CONCERNED AND ALL
THE PARTIES WHICH HAVE INFLUENCE OVER THE PEOPLE THERE IN

LEBANON TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT.

Q. THE ABATING OF THE FIGHTING -- IS THIS RELATED TO THE CONTRADICTION ANNOUNCEMENTS THE OTHER DAY ABOUT WHETHER A CEASEFIRE WAS BEING OBSERVED IN THE SOUTH? THE ISRAELIS HAD ONE VERSION AND THE LEBANESE MILITARY SPOKESMAN HAD ANOTHER.

A. I DON'T RECALL ANY CONTRADICTION ANNOUNCEMENT. IT IS UNCLASSIFIED

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NOT RELATED TO CONTRADICTION ANNOUNCEMENTS; IT IS RELATED TO A SITUATION WHICH WE THINK IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS.

Q. YOUR STATEMENT REFERS TO BEIRUT. DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ON THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON AND THE PROGRESS OF THE LEBANESE ARMY?

A. THE LEBANESE UNIT REMAINS IN THE KAWKABA AREA. LAST NIGHT THIS UNIT WAS SHELLED BY CHRISTIAN MILITIA FORCES, AND ONE SOLDIER WAS KILLED AND SIX INJURED.

WE STRONGLY DEPLORE THIS FIRING AND THE KILLING AND INJURING OF THE LEBANESE SOLDIERS. THESE RECKLESS ACTIONS BY THE MILITIAS MUST STOP.

THE SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON IS EXTREMELY COMPLICATED, AND THE LEBANESE CABINET WILL TODAY, WE UNDERSTAND BE MEETING TO EXAMINE WHAT MIGHT BE DONE.

AS FOR WHAT WE ARE DOING, WE ARE DOING WHAT WE CAN TO FACILITATE REESTABLISHMENT OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE LEBANESE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN SOUTHERN LEBANON, CONSISTENT WITH THE AIMS OF UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 425.

Q. THE SECRETARY, AFTER MEETING WITH MR. BEGIN, SENT A LETTER TO PRESIDENT SARKIS. CAN YOU TELL US WHAT HE SAID IN THE LETTER; WHAT ARE THE CONTENTS OF THE LETTER?

A. I WILL NOT BE ABLE TO TELL YOU THAT.

Q. WOULD YOU CONFIRM THAT HE SENT A LETTER?

A. I DON'T HAVE THAT HERE.
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Q. DOES THE DEPARTMENT HAVE ANY IDEA OF WHETHER THERE IS ANY TRUTH TO THE PERSISTENT REPORTS THAT THE CHRISTIAN MILITIA, WHOM YOU SAY ARE ACTING RECKLESSLY, ARE BEING SUPPLIED BY THE ISRAELIS?

A. THE LAST I THINK WE SAID ON THAT WAS THAT WE HAD SEEN PRESS REPORTS THAT THERE WERE ARMS BEING SUPPLIED TO THE MARONITE COMMUNITY, AND WE HAD BEEN HAVING DISCUSSIONS WITH THE ISRAELIS ABOUT THOSE REPORTS. I DON'T BELIEVE I, OR ANYONE HERE, HAS EVER CONFIRMED THAT WE HAVE INDEPENDENT CONFIRMATION.

Q. WAS THAT PART OF SECRETARY VANCE'S AGENDA WITH PRIME MINISTER BEGIN?

A. ALL I CAN SAY IS THAT THEY DISCUSSED A NUMBER OF SUBJECTS, INCLUDING THE SITUATION IN BOTH NORTH AND SOUTH LEBANON.

Q. WOULD YOU SAY THAT THE MEETING AT CAMP DAVID IS THE RESULT OF MR. VANCE'S TRIP, OR MORE DIRECTLY, THE RESULT OF THE LETTERS HE CARRIED FROM THE PRESIDENT? WHAT OUTCOME CAN YOU EXPECT FROM THE CAMP DAVID MEETING?

A. I APPRECIATE THOSE QUESTIONS, BUT I AM IN THE UNFORTUNATE POSITION OF HAVING TO MAINTAIN RADIO SILENCE ON THIS WHOLE QUESTION OF A CAMP DAVID MEETING. I AM NOT GOING TO BE IN A POSITION TO FLESH OUT ANYTHING WHICH JODY POWELL AND ANOTHER ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL SAID AT THE WHITE HOUSE EARLIER THIS MORNING. I HAVE NO SPECULATIONS AND NO FURTHER ELABORATION TO ADD TO WHAT WAS SAID AT THE WHITE HOUSE.

Q. GOING BACK FOR A SECOND TO THE LEBANESE THING, WOULD THE UNITED STATES OPPOSE IN PRINCIPLE THE SUPPLYING OF UNCLASSIFIED

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ARMS TO THE CHRISTIAN MILITIA BY ISRAEL OR ANYONE ELSE?

A. WHAT WE HAVE SAID IN PRINCIPLE, AND THIS REMAINS POLICY, IS THAT WE HAVE CONSISTENTLY BEEN IN FAVOR OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON THROUGHOUT ITS TERRITORY.

WE HAVE NOTED THAT THE SITUATION IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS.

WE HAVE CALLED FOR A REDUCTION IN THE AMOUNT OF ARMAMENTS IN THE AREA. INCREASES IN ARMAMENTS FROM WHATEVER QUARTER THEY COME WOULD BE INCONSISTENT WITH A REDUCTION OF ARMAMENTS, WHICH IS WHAT WE SEEK TO ACHIEVE.

Q. WHEN YOU SAY EXTREMELY DANGEROUS, ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT THE SITUATION THAT IS INHERENTLY DANGEROUS WITHIN LEBANON ITSELF, OR EXTREMELY DANGEROUS IN THAT IT MIGHT INVOLVE OTHER POWERS?

A. FIRST, LET ME MAKE CLEAR THAT THE STATEMENT WHICH I MADE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE BRIEFING HAD TO DO WITH THE SITUATION IN BEIRUT.

I THINK IT WOULD BE FAIR TO SAY THAT THE SITUATION IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS INTRINSICALLY BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE BEING KILLED THERE. WE BELIEVE THAT THE VIOLENCE IS GOING ON THERE, ALTHOUGH I DID NOTICE SOME SLIGHT, IMMEDIATE IMPROVEMENT, AS I SAID IN MY STATEMENT. I THINK THE DANGER OF THE SITUATION HAS TO DO WITH THE VIOLENCE, THE KILLING AND THE BLOODSHED GOING ON IN LEBANON NOW.

Q. ON THE OTHER SUBJECT OF THE SECRETARY'S VISIT TO THE MIDDLE EAST, IS THERE NOW CONSIDERATION BEING GIVEN TO A UNCLASSIFIED

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SECOND TRIP BY THE SECRETARY WITHIN TEN DAYS TO THE MIDDLE EAST?

A. I HAVE NOTHING ON THAT. I THINK WHAT WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO DO IS WAIT UNTIL THE SECRETARY RETURNS AND REPORTS TO THE PRESIDENT. AT THAT POINT I WOULD HOPE THAT WE WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO OUTLINE WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT.

Q. WHAT IS THE STATUS OF AMERICAN READINESS, OR LACK THEREOF, TO PUT ITS OWN PROPOSALS FOR A SOLUTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST? THAT DOES NOT SEEM TO BE THE PURPOSE OF THE CAMP DAVID MEETING AS IT HAS BEEN EXPLAINED SO FAR.

A. I AM NOT GOING TO BE IN A POSITION TO DISCUSS WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN AT CAMP DAVID, AND I THINK AS TO WHAT GOES ON NEXT, WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO AWAIT THE SECRETARY OF STATE COMING HOME AND SEEING THE PRESIDENT, AND REPORTING WHAT HE HAS BEEN TOLD DIRECTLY BY THE TWO LEADERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THEN WE WILL SEE WHERE WE GO FROM THERE, AS TO WHAT METHOD WILL BE PURSUED.

Q. IS ATHERTON COMING BACK WITH THE SECRETARY?

A. I THINK ANNOUNCEMENTS AS TO THE FUTURE TRAVEL PLANS OF MR. ATHERTON AND MR. SAUNDERS WILL BE MADE BY THE

SECRETARY'S PARTY. I HAVE NOTHING ON THAT FOR YOU.

Q. IS VANCE COMING BACK TOMORROW?

A. YES, THOSE ARE THE CURRENT PLANS. HE WILL BE BACK TOMORROW EVENING.

Q. THE ISRAELI, I THINK IT WAS THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, SENT A LETTER TO ITS COUNTERPART IN THE U.S. CONGRESS SUGGESTING THAT THE U.S. SHOULD CHANGE ITS

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POLICY IN DEALING WITH THE FIGHTING IN SOUTHERN LEBANON.
HAVE YOU ANY COMMENT ON THAT LETTER--BOTH ON THE CONTENT
AND THE IDEA OF SENDING IT PARLIAMENT TO PARLIAMENT?

A. AS FAR AS THE LETTER ITSELF IS CONCERNED, ITS A COMMU-
NICATION TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, AND I THINK THE PLACE FOR
YOU TO ASK ABOUT THE LETTER IS UP ON THE HILL.

AS TO THE ISSUE RAISED BY THE LETTER, WE HAVE URGED AND
ARE CONTINUING TO URGE ALL THOSE WHO HAVE A ROLE IN OR IN-
FLUENCE ON THE SITUATION, TO ACT WITH EXTREME RESTRAINT,
AND TO DO EVERYTHING WITHIN THEIR POWER TO SEE THAT THE
FIGHTING IS BROUGHT TO AN END AND THAT THE CEASEFIRE IS
HONORED.

WE HAVE BEEN IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH MANY QUARTERS ON THE
LEBANESE SITUATION, INCLUDING THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT.

I AM NOT GOING TO BE IN A POSITION TO GO INTO THE SUB-
STANCE OF THOSE DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES. BUT I MIGHT ADD
THAT THEY HAVE BEEN CONSISTENT WITH OUR CALLS FOR
RESTRAINT BY ALL, AND OBSERVATION OF THE CEASEFIRE BY ALL.

Q. DO YOU SHARE THE CONCERNS THAT WERE VOICED IN THAT
LETTER ABOUT THE DANGERS TO THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN
LEBANON, AND THE SUGGESTION WAS THAT THE UNITED STATES
SHOULD JOIN ISRAEL IN BACKING THE CHRISTIANS--SHOULD SHIFT
ITS POLICY?

A. THERE HAS BEEN NO SHIFT IN OUR POLICY.

Q. WILL THERE BE NO SHIFT?

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A. IF I COULD PREDICT THE FUTURE, THEN I WOULD BE IN A
FAR BETTER POSITION THAN I AM. I'M NOT ABLE TO HELP YOU
WITH THAT.

Q. WHAT YOU ARE SAYING THEN IS THAT VANCE ASKED PRIME
MINISTER BEGIN, AS PART OF THEIR DISCUSSIONS THIS PAST

WEEK, TO USE RESTRAINT, TO NOT SEND ANY ARMS INTO THE AREA,
AND TO USE WHATEVER INFLUENCE HE HAS WITH THE LEBANESE TO
ENCOURAGE AN OBSERVATION OF THE CEASEFIRE?

A. YOU CAN PICK DIFFERENT PARTS OF WHAT I HAVE SAID UP
HERE AND PUT THEM TOGETHER. I AM NOT GOING TO PUT THEM

TOGETHER FOR YOU. END TEXT.

CHRISTOPHER

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 26 sep 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS SUMMARIES, PRESS RELEASES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE200580
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: NEA/P:WBHARRIS:RGH
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Expiration:
Film Number: D780325-0307
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197808122/baaaezmh.tel
Line Count: 331
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Message ID: c7d1f759-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1588020
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - AUGUST 8
TAGS: SOPN, XF
To: AMMAN BEIRUT MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/c7d1f759-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014